(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) Maharashtra Hybrid Seed Company (MAHYCO) has been involved in the research, development and testing of transgenic BT cotton varieties for the last five years. As per the directions of the Government, tests have been conducted on these varieties for pollen flow; effect on non-target organisms including insects and soil microflora; and nutritional studies on poltry, fish, cows and buffaloes. These nutritional studies were conducted at National Dairy Research Institute (NDRI), Karnal on lactating cows; Department of Animal Nutrition, College of Vegerinary Sciences, G.B. Pant University of Agriculture & Technology, Pantnagar on lactating buffaloes; Central Avian Research Institute (CARI), Izatnagar on poultry; and Central Institute of Fisheries Education (CIFE), Mumbai on fish. These studies have not indicated any ill effects.

(c) Does not arise.

Protection of Tiger Population

2783. DR. C. NARAYANA REDDY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that though India has the World's largest conservation programme, namely Project Tiger, the population of Tigers in the country has been decreasing;

(b) whether it is also a fact that State Governments are not strictly following the guidelines set by Project Tiger; and

(c) if so, what measure Government propose to take to ensure protection of tiger population?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) As against estimated population of 3750 tigers in 1993, the estimated population of tigers in 1997 was 3826. It will thus be seen that there is no conclusive evidence to show that the tiger population is declining.

(b) Some instances of delayed fund release and posting unsuitable officers as Field Directors of Tiger Reserves have come to the notice of Central Government. Such matters have been taken up with State Governments at highest level.

(c) The efforts made for protection of tiger and other wildlife in the country are:

(i) Legal protection has been provided to wild animals including tigers against hunting and commercial exploitation under the provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

(ii) Financial and technical help is being extended to States under Centrally Sponsored Schemes for enhancing the capacity and infrastructure to provide effective protection to wild animals.

(iii) Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has been empowered under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 to apprehend and prosecute wildlife offenders.

(iv) Ministry of Home Affairs has written to all State Governments to lend a helping hand to field formations for curbing poaching and illegal trade in wildlife.

(v) A Special Coordination and Enforcement Committee has been set up under the chairmanship of Secretary (Environment and Forests), Government of India for control of poaching and illegal trade in wildlife.

(vi) A National Conference of Forests and Environment Ministers of State Government was held on 29th and 30th January, 2001. It was resolved to organise existing protection staff into viable formations for effective control within and outside protected areas.

(vii) During IX Plan period, the area of Tiger Reserves has increased from 33,167 sq. km. to 37,761 sq. km.

(viii) Funding support under Centrally Sponsored Schemes for improvement of habitat and augmenting water supply is also provided.

Progress in Ganga Action Plan

2784. SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Ganga Action Plan was launched in 1985 to bring the water quality in Ganga and its tributaries to bathing levels;

(b) whether, despite having spent more than Rs. 900 crores over 15 years, there has been no reduction in the bacterial load in the river, to the desired level;

(c) whether the technology adopted by the National River Conservation Directorate was found wanting; and

(d) whether NRCD has abandoned its activities since September, 1999 for want of funds and if so, the reasons for not making funds available?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) to (c) The Ganga Action Plan was launched in 1985 to improve the water quality of river Ganga to bathing quality as per designated best use criteria of Central Pollution Control Board as below:—

Class B : Outdoor Bathing Quality

Dissolved Oxygen	=	5 milligram per litre or more
Biochemical Oxygen Demand	=	3 milligram per litre or less
Total Coliforms	=	500 MPN/100 millilitre